

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 CU-02 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

IO-10 OMB-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05

FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 CIEP-01 AGR-05 IGA-02

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R 051052Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SEISTATE WASHDC 6339

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, TH

SUBJECT: THAILAND'S "GENERAL STRIKE" CONTINUES

REF: A) BANGKOK 26894; B) BANGKOK 27005; D) BANGKOK 0051

D) BANGKOK 0063

1. AFTER THREE INDECISIVE DAYS, THAILAND'S "GENERAL STRIKE" MOVED INTO A NEW PHASE AS STRIKE LEADERS CALLED FOR A PUBLIC RALLY IN SUPPORT OF THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S MOVE TO INCREASE RICE AND SUGAR PRICES. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO CALL ON WORKERS TO RETURN TO WORK WHILE REMINDING WORKERS OF THE HARDSHIP THEY WILL EXPERIENCE DUE TO LOSS OF WAGES AND EVEN DISMISSAL FROM THEIR JOBS.

2. AFTER PROMISING NOT TO DISRUPT PUBLIC SERVICES AND NOT TO HOLD A PUBLIC RALLY, STRIKE LEADERS SAW THEIR TACTICS WERE DOING LITTLE TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO RESCIND PLANNED PRICE INCREASES FOR RICE AND SUGAR. IN A LENGTHY AND AT TIMES HEATED MEETING OF STRIKE ORGANIZERS IT WAS DECIDED

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THAT THE "GENERAL STRIKE" WOULD MOVE INTO STAGE TWO WITH

A RALLY OF STRIKING WORKERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS MONDAY AFTERNOON. APPROXIMATELY TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE GATHERED AT THE RAMA IV STATUE, NEAR THE KING'S PALACE. POLICE REPORT ONE FACTORY OWNER REFUSED TO ALLOW EMPLOYEES TO ATTEND THE RALLY UNTIL A SQUAD OF STRIKERS ARRIVED ON MOTORCYCLES TO ASSIST THE PLANT'S WORKERS. VOCATIONAL STUDENTS OPPOSED TO THE RALLY, WHILE ALSO OPPOSING THE IMMINENT PRICE INCREASES, ARE REPORTED BY POLICE TO BE RECRUITING OTHER STUDENTS FOR A COUNTER-RALLY.

3. STRIKE LEADERS BETRAY A FEELING OF UNCERTAINTY AS THEY COMPLAIN OF LACK OF SUPPORT BY SOME UNIONS, WORKERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THAI LABOR (NCTL) (REF C) STILL REFUSES TO SUPPORT THE STRIKE AND CERTAIN STATE ENTERPRISE EMPLOYEES, NOTABLY THE WATER WORKERS, HAVE REPORTED TO WORK IN NEAR NORMAL NUMBERS. LEADERS OF SOME OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS HAVE BEGUN DISCUSSING REDUCING OR CUTTING OFF SERVICE, PRESUMABLY PHASE THREE OF THE STRIKE.

5. AN EMBASSY THAI EMPLOYEE WHO ATTENDED THIS AFTERNOON'S RALLY ESTIMATED THE CROWD AT TEN TO FIFTEEN THOUSAND. THE CROWD WAS ORDERLY AND SPEAKERS VOWED TO REMAIN UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT GAVE IN TO THEIR DEMANDS. TENTS WERE BEING ERECTED IN PREPARATION FOR A LONG STAY.

6. COMMENT: AS PHASE TWO OF THE STRIKE GETS UNDERWAY, BOTH SIDES WILL ONCE AGAIN REVIEW THEIR OPTIONS. AT THIS POINT BOTH STRIKERS AND THE GOVERNMENT SEEM INTENT ON AVOIDING VIOLENCE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, RICE, SUGAR, LABOR STRIKES, PRICES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BANGKO00162
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760002-0591
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760187/aaaaczqj.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BANGKOK 26894, 75 BANGKOK 27005, 76 BANGKOK 51
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUN 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <02 JUN 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THAILAND'S "GENERAL STRIKE" CONTINUES
TAGS: ELAB, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006